A SKETCH OF THE PARISH LIFE OF S. LUKE'S CHURCH, GERMANTOWN

S. Luke's Day, 1971

> S. Luke's is quite conscious that her present anniversary does not make her equal, in age or in dignity, to that which other churches in this diocese and community have attained. Compared with these worthies she might be regarded by some of her elder sisters as still retaining a measure of the immaturity of youth. This much, however, may be said - that she does not dote on being old. She is conscious that her inborn nature, as well as her spiritual equipment as a part, and but a part, of a vastly greater whole endows her with the gift of perpetual youth. For the Catholic Faith, from which she as a parish springs, has the inherent vitality of her great Original, who is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

What a contemporary ring these words have; indeed they describe the spirit and mission of S. Luke's, Germantown in 1971, the 160th anniversary of our beloved parish. But, alas, the above excerpt was taken from Father Samuel Upjohn's centennial address to the parish in 1911! Times change; nations rise and fall; populations shift; the values of the world constantly give way to new fads and fancies. But the Catholic Faith remains forever young, vibrant, glorious. And the mission of the Church, fortified by the Faith of the Saints, moves eternally onward demanding of man his highest loyalty.

Our anniversary celebartion should, therefore, focus on the future mission of the church and of this parish. In a real sense, we can not understand the present or even comtemplate the future, without coming to know the spiritual life which guided and inspired

both priests and laymen who received the Bread of Life at S. Luke's altar for over a century and a half. Their oblations should guide and inspire us as we travel our earthly pilgrimage; hopefully, we too, shall experience the eternal youthfullness of the Church and bring others to these everlasting springs, so that we might rejuvenate our lives, our parish, our neighborhood, our world.

It would be impossible to write a sketch of the parish without giving stress to the development of the Catholic life and the tremendous influence of Father Samuel Upjohn who served as Rector from 1883 to 1923. Realizing the full spiritual benefits of the sacramental life, Father Upjohn labored tirelessly to teach the Catholic Faith by both precept and example. ~~Firmy~~ Firmly convinced of the validity of centrality of the Mass as the chief form of Christian worship, he taught this great doctrine to hundreds of older parishoners and younger confirmands and thus prepared the way for the introduction of the Eucharist at the chief Sunday Services in 1892. In the same year, the daily Mass became the parish norm and has remained such to the present day.

In 1923, the Vestry called a very young curate to follow the patriarchal Father Upjohn as Rector of the parish. We may smile in reading the official (and unpublished) revised history of the parish to discover the opposition of the Bishop who felt that Father Wallace E. Conkling was too young for such an important ecclesiastical post. Father Conkling built upon the Catholic ~~fundation~~ foundation laid by his predecessor and gave the parish a new and vibrant enthusiasm during his monumental ministry amongst us.

A staunch Anglo-Catholic, he made S. Luke's one of the outstanding Anglican parishes on the East Coast. His leadership ability soon became recognized throughout the Anglican communion and in 1941 he was elected Bishop of Chicago. The members of S. Luke's count it a blessing that Bishop Conkling has remained a friend of the parish and visited Germantown during the past two Holy Week seasons to preside at Solemnities in the first church of his ~~preisthood~~ priesthood.

In describing the visible signs of the vitality of our parish life over the years, the missionary activity of the congregation stands in bold relief. Not content with merely preserving and containing the Catholic Faith within its walls, the parish, through the persistent efforts of her priests and the generosity of her laymen, established and supported five missions: S. John the Baptist founded in 1858; House of Prayer (1861); S. Alban, Olney (1891); S. Barnabas (1904); and Holy Nativity (1918).

To us today the development of S. Barnabas, from its early days when Father Upjohn did the hard work of laying the parochial foundation to its eventual and complete re-unification with the Mother Church, is the most significant part of the story of the chapels of S. Luke's. Shortly after the founding of S. Barnabas, a young West Indian priest became the spiritual leader of this small Black congregation. Strong willed, confident, fearing no man but standing in awe of God, Father E. S. Thomas labored in the S. Barnabas vineyard for half a century to make it one of the finest Black parishes in the American Church. Throughout the years, the bonds between the parishes of S. Luke's and S. Barnabas' grew stronger

as each developed its full spiritual life. Hence, in 1968, when the vestries and congregations of both churches voted overwhelmingly to form one parish, the move was received enthusiastically and signalled the beginning of a new era in the life of S. Luke's church. On Low Sunday, 1968, a beautiful April day, the members of S. Barnabas, in solemn procession, left their church on Rittenhouse Street, proceeded down Germantown Avenue to the churchyard at Coulter Street , there to be welcomed by Bishop Chandler Sterling, and the people of S. Luke's. The glorious High Mass celebrated in the packed church on that day became the inspiration for all communicants of the united parish to work and pray for a truly inter-racial society based upon the principles of Christian love.

In an age of much rhetoric about militancy, racism, violence, and extremism, S. Luke's has tried to follow a constructive Christian course of action so that true fellowship will be experienced both at the communion rail and in the larger community. The creation of S. Barnabas' Day School in 1969 is but one attempt to reach out to the young people in the Germantown area. Pray, brethren that the mission of S. Luke's in the future will be as vital , as glorious, as strong, as Catholic as it has been in the past!

In this brief sketch an attempt has been made to highlight some of the characteristics of the parish, especially those significant events from the early part of the 20th century to our present day. The early history of S. Luke's is dealt with in detail by Father Yerkes work published in 1912. Hopefully, at some future date, a

revised historical work will appear. This sketch is meant, however, to be simply an informal essay for the edification of the members and friends of the parish who join in the 160th anniversary celebration.

It is, therefore, fitting to conclude this brief account with the ~~pastoral~~ patronal prayer for S. Luke's Church, Germantown.

> O LORD God Almighty, maker of all things and Giver of all good gifts, who didst put into the hearts of thy servants to lay the foundation stones of this Church, not for their own glory, but to the glory and praise of our Incarnate Lord, and in honor of the blessed Evangelist Saint Luke, for the worship of thy glorious Majesty, the preaching of thy holy Word, the ministration of thy holy Sacraments, and the edification of faithful souls; We thank thee for the abundant blessing which thou hast granted in this place, and we beseech thee, O heavenly Father, to continue the same blessings to us and to our children's children for all generations yet to come, that this Church may ever remain separate from all profane and unhallowed uses, and may continually stand a witness to the people, of thy truth and thy loving kindness, which thou hast shown unto us, in thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Ghost art one God, blessed for evermore. Amen.